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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: WB/G SITREP: AUGUST 12, 2005 (1700 HOURS LOCAL) --
IDF CLASHES WITH AL-AQSA BRIGADES IN NABLUS; TENTATIVE
FATAH-HAMAS AGREEMENT ON ELECTIONS AND DISENGAGEMENT POLICY

This is a joint ConGen Jerusalem/Embassy Tel Aviv cable.

1. (SBU) Summary: In the West Bank, the IDF entered the Nablus casbah on August 11 and clashed with gunmen from the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, injuring one Palestinian in the clashes. In the Gaza Strip, Palestinian police on August 11 found an explosive device near the Eley Sinai settlement. The IDF dismantled the device without incident. Palestinian political sources reported that there is a tentative Fatah-Hamas agreement on several outstanding disputes, including setting a date for Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections and giving the factions an advisory role in disengagement policy planning. End Summary.

West Bank

2. (SBU) ATTACKS/SECURITY:

-- Deaths: Nil.

-- Injuries: The IDF entered the Nablus casbah on August 11 and clashed with gunmen from al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, according to Palestinian newspapers. An al-Aqsa activist, Fadi Qafisheh, was shot and injured in the clashes.

-- Injuries: Civilian security guards on August 11 shot and injured a Palestinian who approached the separation barrier in Sawahreh Sharqiya village near Jerusalem, according to Palestinian newspapers.

-- Arrests: The IDF on August 11 arrested ten alleged Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) activists near Jenin and Nablus, and reported finding an M-16 rifle and ammunition in one of the houses searched in al-Rabah village near Jenin, according to an IDF press release.

3. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- Palestinian political sources reported that there is a tentative Fatah-Hamas agreement on several outstanding disputes, including setting a date for PLC elections and giving the factions an advisory role in disengagement policy planning.

-- Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas met separately with leaders of the PFLP and PIJ in Gaza on August 11 to discuss disengagement, the tahdiyya ("cooling down") and PLC elections.

Gaza

4. (SBU) ATTACKS/SECURITY:

-- Deaths: Nil.

-- Injuries: Nil.

-- Shootings: The IDF on August reported three shootings by Palestinians: one near Rafiah Yam settlement, one near Khan Yunis, and one near Kissufim Crossing, all directed at IDF targets. There were no reported injuries from these incidents.

-- Explosive Device: According to the IDF, Palestinian police found an explosive device near the Eley Sinai settlement on August 11 at 1800 hours. The IDF dismantled the device and no injuries resulted.

5. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/INTERNAL CHECKPOINTS:

-- Erez crossing was open for Palestinians on August 12 with 150 Palestinian laborers and 50 Palestinian merchants using the crossing.

-- The Erez Industrial Zone was closed on August 12.

-- Rafah Terminal was open in both directions, but closed to Palestinian males between the ages of 16 and 35 on August 12. UNRWA reported that the IDF allowed Palestinian males in this age group to cross, provided they had coordinated their travel with Israeli authorities through PA officials.

-- The Karni terminal was partially open on August 12.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed for Palestinian laborers but open for construction materials on August 12.

-- Netzarim Junction at Salahadeen Road was closed on August 12.

-- The Netzarim Coastal Road was open on August 12.

-- The Abu Khouli internal crossing was open during most daylight hours on August 12.

-- Salahadeen Road was open at Sufa/Morag on August 12.

-- The Abu Al-Ajeen bypass road was closed on August 12.

--- The Toufah checkpoint was closed on August 12, except for residents of Mawasi.

16. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- Israeli security forces and police officers will enter Gaza settlements on August 15 and inform all settler residents that they have 48 hours to leave their homes, and that those who refuse will be forcibly removed.

-- The Israeli Government on August 12 announced that the Kissufim crossing into Gaza will be closed to all civilian traffic as of August 14. The closure will continue until the disengagement process is completed.

-- Israeli media on August 12 reported that the IDF announced a sharp drop in Palestinian terrorist attacks in the Gaza Strip, reportedly attributed by the IDF to actions by the PA and the Egyptians against terrorist groups.

-- According to IDF radio, Israeli DefMin Shaul Mofaz has set September 4 as the completion date for disengagement, a week earlier than planned.

-- IDF radio on August 12 reported that Israeli-Palestinian coordination efforts around disengagement have increased and that a joint Israeli-Palestinian "war room" will operate as of August 12 to coordinate disengagement operations.

WALLES